

Welcome to the 85th CD Division

Booklet issued by 85th Infantry Division during the war. This booklet was given to the new replacement troops as an introduction to the 85th Division and its combat experience. It also provide some useful tips for the green GI.

Booklet was written by Captain Paul Schultz who would publish the hard-bound unit history of the 85th Division after the war.

Approved for release by Censors.



(Back cover)



(Front Cover)

Published by Division Info-Educ Office
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Passed by Field Press Censor

WELCOME to the 85th Division. We are sorry we cannot offer you a comfortable Morris chair or a tall, cool glass of your favorite drink on this occasion but we can and do extend a cordial handclasp. You have joined a veteran, seasoned Infantry division. The men of the 85th have been victors over the Germans in the smashing of the Gustav, Hitler, Kesselring, and Gothic lines in more than a year of combat in Italy. The Custer Division, as the 85th is called, got its name while training for World War I at Camp Custer, Michigan. Two regiments were in France while the Third, the 339th, fought under British command in Russia during the first World War.

After reactivation at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in 1942, the Division trained there for 11 months and went on to maneuvers in Louisiana and California. Two months of

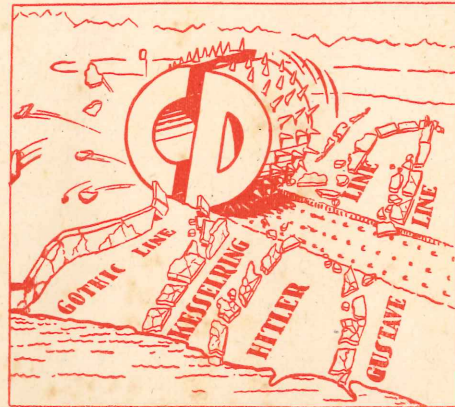
SORRY —



intensive firing at Ft. Dix, N. Y. were followed by a trip overseas to North Africa where two more months were spent in amphibious and mountain training.

On the 11th of May of last year, 1944, the 85th Division attacked the German Gustav Line in Italy in the vicinity of Minturno, 40 miles north of Naples. After three days of fierce fighting against elaborate defenses and determined enemy resistance, the Division broke through and forced the enemy into retreat. The Germans fought delaying actions, but their resistance was stiff at many points, particularly near Terracina and in the hills above Highway 7. The capture of Terracina by the 85th, now driving hard northward toward Rome on the left flank of Field Marshal Alexander's great offensive, opened the way for a junction with the Anzio Beachhead forces. Smashing through the steep hill defenses between Valmontone and Velletri, the 85th was among the first of the 5th Army Units to reach the outskirts of Rome. The Division swung sharply southwest here to cut Highway 7, before entering the city. On the 5th of June the 85th continued the pursuit through Rome, driving the enemy before it up Highway 2, north of Rome some 40 miles before it was relieved by the 3rd Algerian Division.

Following a period of rest and training of more than a month, a few miles west of



Rome, the Division moved north some 150 miles to back up the Allied forces closing in on Florence and the Arno River. The 85th held a broad stretch of the Arno west of Florence and then swung northeast of the city to assault the Gothic line, the main line of German defenses across the Appennines. Again the 85th rained unrelenting blows on the Germans and, after 4 days of heavy fighting, overcame thirty-foot bunkers cut into the mountains; minefields and wire barriers; steel tank turrets anchored in concrete, housing 88 mm guns fortified strongpoints; a determined enemy and 3000 foot mountains; to smash the Gothic line and again hurl the enemy back into retreat. For the next 45 days, the Custer Division constantly attacked and drove the enemy steadily back across the rugged Appennine mountain ranges in some of the roughest fighting country in the world.

Near the end of October a defense line was established across the foothills in front of the Po Valley. The Division spent most of the winter holding positions in the western and central Appennines.

How effectively the 85th carried out its assignments against the enemy is indicated by the awards received. Three members of the Division have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and four companies have received Presidential Citations. Other awards include 27 Distinguished Service Crosses, 54 Legions of Merit, 461 Silver Stars, 81 Air Medals, 22 Soldiers Medals and 2895 Bronze Stars.

We thought we would give you this brief picture of the Division so you would have a general idea of the organization to which you now belong. In addition we have tried to anticipate some of the questions that you are no doubt turning over in your mind at this time.

LENGTH OF TIME IN THE DIVISION BEFORE YOU ENTER COMBAT

This will depend on the situation. If you are needed right away you will go into action right away. If the tactical situation doesn't require you, you will get further conditioning and training until you are needed.

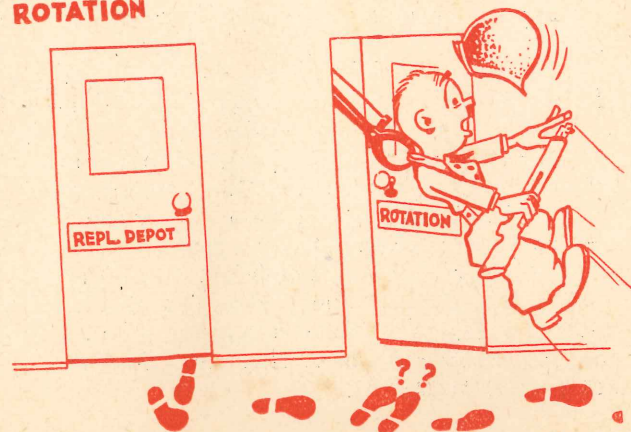
NATURE OF TRAINING

Wherever you are assigned you will get as much of the very best training in weapons and tactics as time permits. Our best officers and NCO's, who have been tested in combat, will be assigned to instruct you.

YOUR NEXT STOP

You may be assigned to one of the supporting arms or services e. g. to the 328th, 329th, 910th or 403d Field Artillery Battalion, or to the 85th Signal Company, but more than likely you will be assigned to one of the three Infantry Regiments, 337th, 338th, or 339th.

ROTATION

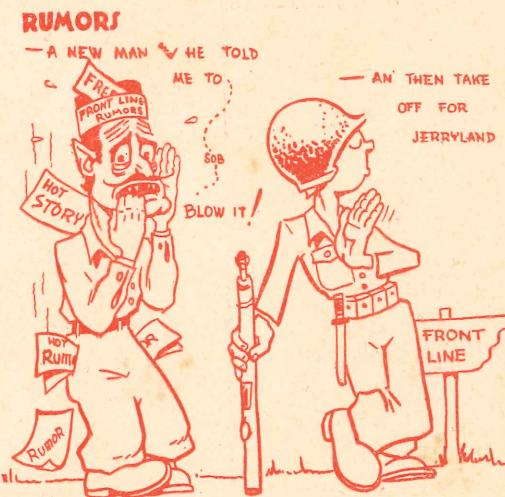


ROTATION

You *don't* go to the bottom of the rotation list. Now that you are with us, you are just as much a part of the Division as the next fellow. Your rotation status is based on your length of service overseas, not on the date you joined us.

RUMORS AND WILD STORIES

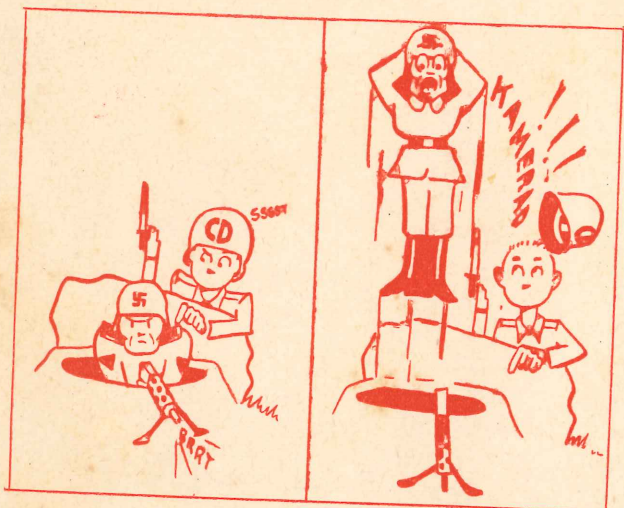
You've heard a lot of them. The only place where rumors spread faster than at a ladies sewing circle is on the battlefield. An Allied motorcycle messenger in Africa once misinterpreted a statement he overheard and went dashing back toward the rear stating that the Germans had broken through. No such thing had happened but by the time the resulting confusion and near panic had been brought under control, a lot of ground had been lost. Be quizzical; take your horror stories with a grain of salt. Demand that the rumor



spreader give details and quote reliable authority. We can tell you right here that often the going is pretty tough, but everybody is in it along with you, which seems to make it easier. One of our replacements who went up to the lines for a while and came back said "It wasn't especially pleasant, but it was nothing like the wild stories I'd heard."

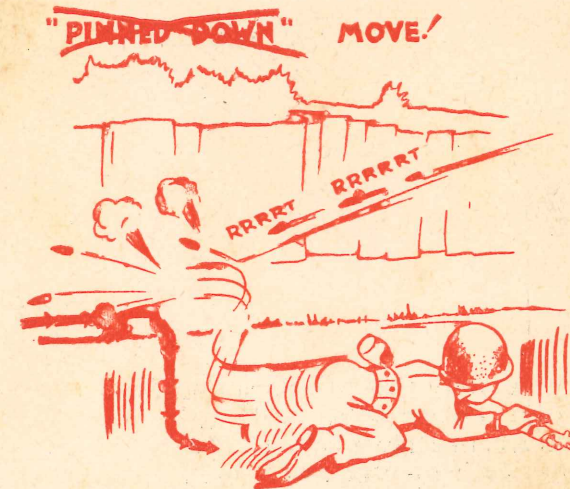
PERFORMANCE OF OTHER REPLACEMENTS

You may be wondering how other men like yourself who have joined our Division as replacements have made out. They have done a good job. Some of them have won promotions to Corporal, Sergeant, and even Tech Sergeant. A few are slated to go to Officers Candidate School. Many have won Bronze and Silver Stars. We mention this not to give you any artificial encouragement but to assure you that as Joe Penner used to say "You, too, can be the life of the party." You too, can make good. The recipe is resolution, courage, and hard work.

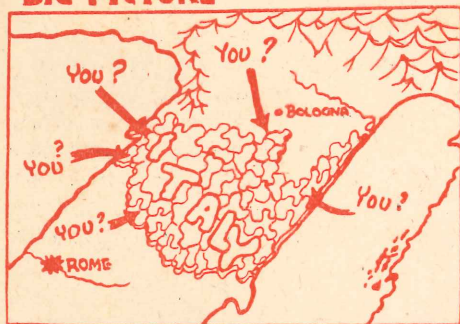


THE ENEMY AND SOME COMBAT ADVICE ON HOW TO DEAL WITH HIM

Be aggressive ; think out in advance, every angle of what you're going to do. Have an alternate plan and be prepared to carry it out swiftly. There is never any advantage to be gained by giving the enemy any chance to rest if you can help it. Hit him hard with everything you've got, rock him back on his heels and don't let up — keep him off balance. Our men have found by experience that if you strike hard at the German, maneuver, and get in at him he'll give up. But if you allow him to keep you at a distance he'll stay there till doomsday and fire at you. Our men also found that the expression of being "pinned down by enemy fire" should be thrown out of your vocabulary. You only aid the enemy by giving him a stationery machine gun or mortar target. Move! Get out of the area; maneuver; strike back at him.



"BIG PICTURE"



15th Army Group Commander, has a plan for the defeat of the German forces in Italy and you are helping to carry it out. Remember too, that the Germans in Northern Italy would like to be able when forced to it, to pull into the mountains of northern Italy, and southern Germany and fight on as guerillas. So if we don't utterly destroy them now we'll just have to go after them all over again later on under infinitely worse conditions of terrain and weather. Remember that as the swollen river is made up of single drops of water, so the flood tide of General Clark's final offensive in Italy will be swollen by the rain of many single blows by the individual soldier -- that's you. Fighting beside you are other American Divisions in addition to large forces of British, New Zealand, South African,

Be conscious of the fact that your squad is capable of great firepower. Offer your full efforts in its development. Make your contribution to the teamwork, aggressiveness and coordination of your squad. A determined assault by your whole squad against a 3 man enemy machine gun nest has a far greater chance of success than a half hearted attempt by just a few members.

Get as much of the big picture as you can. Remember that in addition to your company, your regiment, and your division, you are a member of the 5th Army and the 15th Army Group. Be ever mindful that General Clark,

Brazilian, Italian and Polish troops, all heavily supported by the tremendous striking power of the Air Forces and Naval Craft.

Remember, too, what and who we are fighting. The people on the other end of those incoming shells are the swaggering, goose-stepping, Heil-howling nuisance of a nation that has for generations been plaguing the world with its militaristic escapades; they are the whining, blustering, bloodthirsty bullies who set out to conquer the world but who have been broken and bloodied and almost everywhere hurled back into their own country and now, in mounting confusion and destruction, are having their own soil burned, blackened, and seared from end to end. We entered the War to protect the security of our homes and they will not be safe until this enemy has been thoroughly crushed.

The Italian campaign is an integral part of our final victory, in which you will play an important part. The successful conclusion of the campaign will destroy the German Armies in Italy. It will deprive Germany of the industrial plants of northern Italy which they now use extensively to supply the fronts in Germany, Hungary and Italy. It will make sure that with the Allied Armies surging across the Rhine and the Oder the German troops in Italy will not be there to help save their homeland.

You have a job to do -- a job that requires courage and determination, qualities that your family and friends for whom you fight will be proud to know that you possess. By the swiftness with which you adapt yourself to your new assignment, by the clearness of your understanding of the value of teamwork, by the aggressiveness that you display in attacking the enemy with speed and violence wherever he may be found -- by these things you will gain the respect and devotion of the men who fight

beside you ; by these things you will help your country to help the rest of the United Nations accomplish our ultimate goal—the defeat of the German Armies.

Every officer and enlisted man of the 85th Division is ready to give you any help or information you need.

We welcome your assistance and we value your ability. With confidence in the strength of our arms and in the justice of our cause, and with our eyes on the golden peace of tomorrow, the fruit of our labors, we shall go on together to victory.



The shoulder patch which you will now wear is composed of a circle of khaki, upon which the monogram "CD" appears in bright red. While training in Camp Custer in 1917, the 85th picked up its nickname "Custer Division." Later in France, when orders were received to adopt a shoulder patch insignia, the CD was chosen.

THE CUSTER COMBATEER is your division newspaper. It was named by a T/4 of our 329th Field Artillery Bn., in contest in which more than 2000 names were submitted. The paper is edited by a staff of enlisted men. Its pages are open for your contributions.

